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### Governor Schweitzer includes \$350,000 for horse racing in proposed budget

November 20, 2006

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By Phyllis Tryon

Governor Brian Schweitzer has included \$350,000, to be dispersed over two years, to help local entities sustain live horse racing, in his budget proposal to be submitted to the legislature. So announced Evan Barrett, the Governor's Chief Business Development Officer, at the Montana Horse Racing Task Force meeting on November 16 in Helena.

Barrett explained the funds were to help defray costs of \$11,000 to \$12,000 per day for all regulatory officials at race meets across the state in the next two years. Those costs are "something that is a burden to locals," he said, and are to help race meets in Montana pending other legislative solutions. It has become obvious to the Governor's office, the Task Force, and those involved in the racing industry that funding is needed to help save racing in the state before long-term solutions can be implemented.

Barrett expressed appreciation for the continuing efforts of the Task Force.

"Keep at it," he said. "There are solutions out there, and we just have to keep pursuing it."

He also noted that horse racing is part of Montana history.

"The Governor is committed to horse racing and would love to see this piece of Montana continue and not just die away," he said.

Although the Economic Impact Statement (EIC) being prepared by MSU-Billings is not yet available, the Montana Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association delivered a check via Task Force member Bill Schmitt to assist in the effort. Horsemen Larry Jordan had yet to receive an answer from the American Paint Horse Association regarding any grant money they may donate, but expected to hear soon.

Task Force Chair Dale Mahlum reported that the EIC should be available shortly.

Paul Pryor, President of the Montana Race Horse Breeders Association, which was formed this past year to represent all breeds racing in Montana, requested that the Task Force officially recognize this breeders' group as the official breeders' organization of the state. A motion to that effect was quickly made and seconded and passed unanimously. The MRHBA is a non-profit with a mission to promote and enhance horse racing and the race horse breeding industry in Montana, promote a Montana Bred Race Horse Breeders' Incentive program, and protect the rights and interests of

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